Numb. 94.

THE OBSERVATOR.

On the Effect of Her Majesties Proclamation against Vice, &c. *The* Country-man's *Story of the Commitment of Lewd Women at* London. —— *The Deficiencies of the Laws against Vice*, &c. *The Irregular Practice of keeping Publick Houses.*

From Saturday March the 13th, to Wednesday March the 17th, 1703.

Country m. MAster *Observator*, I can now according to my own Knowledge, give you an Account of the happy Effect of Her Majesties Proclamation against *Vice*, *Prophaness*, &c. I had occasion this Journey to go to *Westminster*, passing thro' St. *Martins-Lane*, I saw a great Crowd at a Church-door, and enquiring the occasion of such a Concourse of People, I was told, That a Company of Lewd Women, to the number of 60 odd, were then upon Examination before the Bench of Justices, Assembled for that Purpose in the *Church-Vestry*. It seems the Justices, in Obedience to Her Majesties Proclamation, had the Night before spread their Net, and had caught all these Ladies at one hawl in that Liberty, tho' 'twas there said, They were not one Tenth part of the Lewd Women of *Westminster*, for only the poor Ones are Caged, the Others have wherewithal to Purchase their Liberty of a sort of Fellows they show'd me there in Blew-Coats, with long Staves in their Hands.

The general Discourse there, was that all these *Does* were committed to Her Majesties *Pound*, the *Bride-well* in *Tuttle-fields*; and I having the Curiosity to see so many of *Cresswells* Children in one place, I got an honest Gentleman of my Acquaintance in *Westminster*, to give me a view of their Whoreships the next Morning, when, to my great Grief, I found but 15 or 16 of the Sixty odd in *Bride-well*; my Friend and my self being desirous to have some Discourse with these *Creatures* beg'd a few Minutes Respite from the *Hemp-Block* for two or three of them, and over a Quartern of *Brandy* and a Pot of *Ale*, we examined into their Lives and Conversations, which brought them to that Scandal; they were not asham'd to own themselves to be Whores, but said it was their Profession, and a Trade they had learn't; nor were they asham'd of beating *Hemp*, or the Discipline of Whipping, for I found it was a common thing to them, they esteem'd it neither a Scandal nor Punishment, but a Misfortune common to their Employment.

They enter into that Profession of Vice very Young, when the *Devil* Tempts most, and when the Immaturity of their Age and Reason renders them Incapable of making a Vigorous Defence of their *Chastity*. One of 'em was very handsome and not above Nineteen, and had been a Jilt above three Years, she first was reduced by a Person who kept her some time; but upon his Marriage with a Fortune, left her, and then she turn'd a common Strumpet. Any Person might have been deceived in this deluded Girl; she had as much Modesty as ever I saw in one Face, and I really pitied her being a *Whore*.

The other was Ordinary and very Impudent, and when we perswaded her to live Honest and Reform her self, she swore she would be a *Whore* as long as she liv'd; and telling her of the Pious Care Her Majesty had taken of her Soul; she said it was quite contrary, and tended to her Damnation: *For*, says she, *the Expence I am at in this Confinement must I make good by Speedy Repeated Commission of Sins when I am at Liberty:* She said, *The Queen would do better to give a* Toleration for Whoring, *for which we would pay a good Tax to the Publick. I am*, said she, *brought to this House, and other Places of Labour and Correction, at least four times a Year, which costs me* 20 s. *a time, which is* 4 l. *a Year; now*, said she, *I am willing to give the Queen* 8 l. *a Year for a Licence.* —— *And how much Money may be raised at* 8 l. *a Head for every Whore in* England? I smil'd to my self at the Conceit of this *Witty Wicked One*; but I replyed, Her Majesty had no Occasion of such Money, her Honest Subjects took care to supply her Treasury with better Aids. She very readily reply'd, *By this Means, we are able to maintain a good Army, and shall always keep 'em Recruited with our own Bastards; so that in* 20 *Years time we shall pay this Tax for the support of our own Children.* I asked her how she came first to be Debauched: She said, *It was done by a great Gamester about Town, who allowed her Seven Guineas a Week, which then would not keep her, tho' since he has cast her off, she has been contented with much less.*

I found by their Discourse that they are Instructed in the *Art of Whoring* by Old *Bawds*, who seduce these Girls from Services, and their Parents Families, into the High-Road to *Hell*. I thought at that Time of what you were saying t'other Day in Relation to the *Play-Houses*; for I found that Place is the common Haunt of these Miserable Wretches. They did not once reflect on their Folly or Sin; nay, not on their present Labour of beating of *Hemp*, or the prospect of a Flogging, but much they Lamented their Confinement, as hind'ring them from the Pleasures of the *Play-house*. And the most Wicked of the Girls, did aver, That let the most Virtuous Woman in *England* use the *Play-house* but one Week, she would of Necessity turn *Whore* the next. I ask'd 'em the Reason why so few of 'em were Committed out of so many taken? They answer'd, *Because they had good Luck, sometimes it had been their Luck to escape, when those who now escap'd had been sent to the House of Correction.* They said, *They knew most of 'em to be* Whores, *but they had their Friends about 'em. Some of 'em pass'd as Married Women, and their Children were Produc'd*; And this they said was a common thing, when one *Whore* was to be brought before a Justice, for another to borrow a Child, and bring it thither, and so make her pass for a Married Woman, whose Husband was at Sea, or in the

the Army. They told us abundance of Stories of the Corruption of Officers, how they have been Debauch'd by the very *Constables*, who have been charged to carry them to the *House of Correction*, and also by the *Reformation Men*, as they call'd them. Could I have tarry'd any longer, I believe, these *Mistresses of Arts* would have discovered the whole course of their *Studies* and *Practice*. But what I have remembered that is Material, I have told you, thereby to engage you in a farther Discourse of *Reformation of Manners*, than which, nothing can be more Advantagious to our Sinful Land.

Obs. It signifies nothing what you and I say on this Subject; nay, Her Majesties Pious *Care* of *Reformation* in Her repeated Proclamation against *Vice* and *Prophaness*, signifies nothing if the Bent and Inclination of the People be against it, or if their Minds are employ'd on other Objects more suitable to their *Depraved* Natures, and the *Corruption* of their Minds: We had, you know, for many Months last past our Land turn'd into a *Theater*, on which the Quarrel of *Occasional Conformity* was so long *Contested*, that the *Cudgels* were at last crost, our Authors being weary of the Fight, and out of Breath; but if you observ'd, Honest *Country-man*, during the whole Session of Parliament, you and I could get not so much as One Book written either by *Layman* or *Clergy*, against *Debauchery*, *Atheism*, and *Prophaness*, and all *Immoral Practices*, whereby they might have excited our Representatives to an Enquiry into the Deficiencies of the Laws already made against *Vice* and *Lewdness*, and have encouraged the *Legislative Power* in the making of New Laws for the effectual Suppression of all manner of *Immorality*. When Her Majesty in Her most Gracious Speeches to both *Houses of Parliament*, and in Her Declaration, declar'd Her stedfast Resolution to Maintain the *Church of England* in Her *Rights* and *Priviledges*, and also to Maintain the *Toleration* of *Protestant Dissenters*, as Establish'd by Law, the *Clergy* of both Parties can Address Her Majesty on this Account; but I don't remember that any of them yet have Address'd Her Majesty for Her great care of *Religion* in the Suppression of *Vice*, which is so Pious an Undertaking in our truly *Religious Protestant* Queen, that on this Account she ought to be Address'd in Letters of Gold; and even in Her Life time a Statue ought to be Erected to Her Pious Memory.

The Laws already made against *Vice*, if duly Executed, would in some Measure restrain the Currency of *Lewdness* in our Nation. But there are many Deficiencies in those Laws which might be made good by the *Legislative Power*. The Men ought to be Punishable as the Women for Sins of *Uncleanness*. The Scandal of beating of *Hemp*, of being *Whipt* in *Bridewell*, would more terrifie the *Beau-Town-Bulls*, than all the Judgments in the Scriptures Denounced against *Whore-mongers* and *Adulterers*; these are invisible and future Punishments; but the *block* and the *whip* are in View; and since the Notion of *Honour* has supplanted that of *Religion*, some Men will sooner Damn their *Souls* than Lose their *Reputation*. They do not esteem the *Commission* of Sin a Scandal, they'll own themselves to be *Lewd*, and will Glory in their *Debauchery*; but to be stigmatiz'd as such by the just Lash of the Law, is what they dread and fear, and what they account Scandalous.

Another Deficiency is, the not punishing of such as Harbour, Entertain, or Lodge Lewd Men and Women; these Persons are equally Guilty with the others, as being the Abettors of Lewdness, they are Principals in the Sin, and ought to come under the *Cognizance* of the Law. Who is the most Guilty, the *Old Bawd* that keeps the House, and instructs the Young Wicked Ones in the *Ways of Uncleanness*, or the Young Ones that follow the Dictates of *Corrupt Nature* under the *Conduct* of their *Governess*? The *Bawd*. I think the Edge of the Law ought to be directed against these *Cinders of Hell*, these *Instructing Beldames*, as the first *Movers* and *Instruments* of *Uncleanness*. The Laws in *Cases* of *High Treason*, make the *Contrivers* of the *Plot*, equally Guilty with the *Assassines* that Murder a *Crown'd Head*; these Superannuated *Harlots* are the *Plotters* against *Vertue*; and the Young *Lewd* Ones are the *Instruments* with which it is Assassinated: If there be Laws made against *Kidnapping* of Peoples Children, and *Transporting* them to the Plantations and Foreign Countries; and these Laws are thought the most Equitable and Reasonable: much more reasonable is it to have the strictest Laws Enacted against the *Kidnapping* of Childrens Souls, because the Soul is more valuable than the Body.

It is without Doubt a fault in the *Magistracy*, or a Connivance in *Headburroughs*, *Beadles*, and other Officers, that so many *Bawdy Houses* in the Cities of *London* and *Westminster* are kept under the Notion of *Coffee-Houses* and *Ale-Houses*; which I am afraid are a great (I don't say good) Advantage to some sort of Men, who make a *Gain* of other Peoples *Sins*. If the Good and Antient Laws of this our Realm, which relate to *Victualling-Houses*, were put in Execution, it would soon reduce the Multiplicity of *Publick-Houses* into a narrower Compass. Our Vertuous and Prudent *Progenitors*, allow'd none to keep a *Publick House*, but such as were reduced to Wants in their old Age, in consideration of which they gave them Liberty to sell Drink, and that only in their own Parishes, and in *London*, not out of the Ward wherein they had lived, and were known to the Principal Inhabitants. No Young Fellows, or Jilts, as now-a-days were allowed to keep a *Publick House*; for 'tis a Shame Young Fellows who are fit for the Army or Navy, and Young Wenches, who are able to subsist by their Labour, shou'd Eat the Bread of the Aged Poor. In former Times, when *Vertue* Flourished in *England*, a Bush on a Sign, or a Chequer on the Door was a Token of Poverty, and seem'd to be no more in effect than the Badge of the Parish; But now our Vintners and Ale-House keepers are the top Men of the Parish, are generally Parish Officers, and of late Years have got into *Commission* in the *Militia*. They are not Confin'd to their own Parishes, but set up where they please. If an Old *Bawd* be Routed at *Wapping*, she removes into the City; if disturb'd there, she takes her Flight to *Westminster*, and so on to any place where she's least Known. ——I find it grows late, and we must all Jogg homewards; but at our next Meeting we will have a little more Discourse on this Subject.

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